

AMERICA AND BULGARIA

AND

THEIR MORAL BONDS

BY

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MEMBER OF THE BULGARIAN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



BERN

PAUL HAUPT, AKADEMISCHE BUCHHANDLUNG

1918

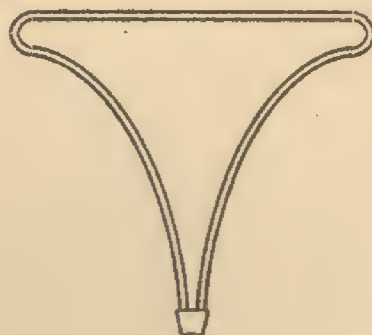


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Recently a good deal has been written about America's attitude towards Bulgaria. In certain places in Europe it is considered politically unjustified and even illogical, that after the United State's entry in the war, the Bulgarian minister should still be retained in Washington. This view is not only overhasty, but one-sided and superficial. It is one-sided, because it is maintained by Bulgaria's neighboring states which look upon the foreign policy of America through the prism of their petty conception of the world. It is superficial, because it is the opinion of certain political circles and individuals little versed in Balkan matters. Very differently think upon the subject practical statesmen who are familiar with the history of the Balkan Peninsula and the story of Bulgarian regeneration in particular. To such serious and impartial thinkers the conduct of the American public men is natural, logical, and in harmony with the principles upon which is founded the structure of the Greatest Republic in existence.

Professor R. A. Reiss, one of the co-editors of the *Gazette de Lausanne*, it seems, is completely under the influence of the Serbian and Greek politicians. Wholly

devoted to the views insisted upon by his inspirers, he never ceases to closely scrutinize and discuss the foreign policy of the United States of America. He has frequently written upon this theme in the *Gazette de Lausanne*. In its issue of August 25 last, he once more, and with more vehement persistence, emphasizes the thought, that America, if she is to be logical in her actions, should at once declare war on Bulgaria. Why Prof. Reiss, a Swiss citizen, so ardently perseveres in prescribing what course of action America should employ in her relations with other countries, is indeed, difficult to explain. One thing is certain, however, and that is, that the idea he preaches is an *idée fixe* of the Athens and Corfu Governments. These latter are doing all they can in that direction before the Entente's cabinets, and recently have turned their efforts towards convincing the American Government of the necessity of its breaking off with Bulgaria. Mr. Vesnitch, the Serbian minister in Paris, several months ago was delegated to America to plead the cause of "democratic Serbia" against "retrograde Bulgaria"! Only a few weeks ago Miletius, Metropolitan of Athens, sailed for America with the same end in view. He was accompanied by a large cortège of scholars and diplomats. It seems a fact that the Greek and Serbian representatives at the White House have been instructed to always remind the President of the United States of the old maxim, "delenda Carthago" by substituting the word Bulgaria for Carthage.

Serbian and Greek diplomacy, it must be admitted, have achieved some success in influencing public opinion in America. Already on two occasions a motion

was introduced in the Senate urging that America declare war on Bulgaria. Greeks and Serbians are firmly convinced that their efforts will be crowned with success also in Washington, as they were in the capitals of the Entente Powers in 1913, when they became the cause of the disruption of the Balkan Alliance, so vital for the Entente. All that was done because Greece and Serbia dreaded Bulgaria's position as the most viable member of the Balkan Block. That conduct on the part of these two states, of course, was a fatal shortsightedness. For had the Balkan Alliance of 1912 been preserved, the Balkan peace would have been guaranteed, and Austro-Hungary and Germany would not have plunged into war in 1914, and if they did, the war wouldn't have been of such a long duration. Thanks to the serious political blunders committed in Petrograd and Paris at the instigation of Serbians and Greeks, Germany hastened the blow before Russia was given an opportunity of completing her military preparations.

In 1913 America was able to keep aloof from the erring diplomacy of the European powers. The President of the United States, being a keen observer of history, was able to form an accurate judgment concerning the Balkan events. He looked upon the aspirations of Serbians, Greeks, Roumanians, and Bulgarians through the vision of a champion of freedom, justice, the principles of nationalities, and the right of a people to self-government. He did not confound justice and liberty with chauvinism — the source of all evils that have afflicted the Balkan peoples for centuries. In his view the Balkan Peninsula is a chaos of envy, hatred, conflicts, bloodthirstiness, which needs thorough pur-

ging from these combustible materials. That is a duty obligatory on the Great Powers, which they should perform, not by encouraging the illegitimate ambitions of this or that nation, but by furthering the realization of the nationality criterium, right, and equity, among the hostile Balkan peoples. Then as now, President Wilson remains firmly convinced of the fact that in South-Eastern Europe lasting tranquillity can be effected, not by abetting and supporting the fantastic ambitions for the restoration of states and empires long dead and buried, but by helping every race and people to win their place in the sun, according to the principles of self-determination, ethnic and cultural necessities, and justice. The Balkan Peninsula may be converted into a land of peace-loving states given not to incessant strifes and self-extermination, but to culture, honorable pursuits, and legitimate rivalry. Such a blessed state of things, however, can be realized only when every Balkan people attains its natural and ethnic boundaries, and thus equipped, be prepared for the formation of a strong United States of the Balkans. Such a democratic federation should not be considered a dream of a maniac, but a sacred ideal, for the realization of which every Balkan citizen should devote his thoughts and energy.

The Balkan Alliance of 1912 though short-lived and ill-fated was an important step in that direction. And if that combination was a happy idea for a most noble undertaking, the Treaty of Bucarest, on the other hand, was its antipode, a fatal catastrophe for the Balkan peoples, and a great danger for the peace of Europe. The premisses of the present world conflict are before the eyes of all. It is clear today that it is the bloody

events in the Balkans which preceded and are organically connected with the present war that are its premisses.

The penetrating and practical mind of the American was quick to grasp and point out the causes of the gigantic strife that is devouring humanity today. America was the first to remind the world of them. In 1913, guided by wisdom, tact, and perspicacity, she alone of all Great Powers had the courage of her moral conviction to abstain from assenting to the stipulations of the Bucarest Treaty. Through the voice of its President the United States, not only did not join the other Powers in felicitating the late King Carol of Roumania as "Peacemaker", not only considered the Bucharest Treaty an act of injustice and violence, but in order to warn the world of the danger to peace which it entailed, she hastened to raise a protest in behalf of the oppressed peoples and to insist that her proposition be constituted into a special article in the Treaty. Its framers, however, turned a deaf ear to her request. But what impressed the world most, no doubt, was that America's interference was made not in behalf of this or that people in particular, as was done by some of the Great Powers, but in behalf of down-trodden humanity in general. United States entered this war, namely, to see the principle of nationalities and freedom of one's conscience carried into reality.

The conduct on the part of the Great Republic across the ocean is in harmony with her traditional democratic spirit, her love for justice, equality, freedom, progress. Every time she was compelled to interfere in European matters, it was always done in the name of some

principle, equity, and humanity. In 1876 through its unofficial representatives in Europe, its professors, and publicists, America succeeded in changing the theory of the "integrity of the Ottoman Empire", which was one of the fundamental doctrines of the Conservative governments in England, and which was staunchly advocated by Austro-Hungary and France. The investigations of the Turkish atrocities committed in 1876, made by the American consul Schuyler and the American correspondent of the London Daily News, J. A. McGahan, thrilled public opinion in England and strengthened the hands of Mr. Gladstone in his campaign against the Turk. Both the press and the public sentiment were so aroused against the horrors perpetrated in Bulgaria by the Turks, that Lord Derby, the then English Foreign Minister, was constrained to inform Sir Henry Elliott, the British Ambassador in Constantinople, that "every vestige of sympathy for Turkey is today totally destroyed, owing to the sad events that have taken place in Bulgaria".

The Constantinople Conference of 1876 composed of representatives of the Great Powers, which was convened in order to devise some means of solving the Bosnian and Bulgarian questions, is largely the work of the American Consul Schuyler, which was soon espoused by the Russian Ambassador to Turkey, General Ignatieff. Schuyler and Prince Tserteleff of Russia, assisted by the American professors of Robert College, prepared a sketch for the autonomy of Bosnia and Bulgaria. The delegates of the Great Powers unanimously approved the plan worked out by the Americans, according to which, Bulgaria was constituted into two

Provinces: *Eastern*, with Tirnovo, as capital, comprizing the Sandjaks of Roustchouk, Tirnovo, *Toultcha*, Varna, Sliven, Plovdiv, and Kirk-Killisseh; *Western*, with Sofia as capital, and including the sandjaks of Sofia, Vidin, *Nish*, *Skopie*, *Bitolia*, *Seres*, and the Kazas of Stroumitsa, Tikvesh, Veles, and *Castoria*. These same boundaries were specified in the turkish *Firman* of 1870, in virtue of which was created the Bulgarian National Church. The San-Stefano Treaty concluded between Russia and Turkey sanctioned practically the same Bulgarian ethnical limits.

American and English pioneers, some with their speech, others with their pen, third by means of their enlightened influence and authority, prepared the Bulgarian war of Liberation in 1877, and paved the way for the rush of the armies of Alexander II across the Danube in pursuit of the Ottoman hordes. These men were: Gladstone, Schuyler, McGahan, Dr. Long, President Washburn, Sir Edwin Pears, and others. Without the initiative of these philanthropic men Tsar Alexander of Russia would have found his decision blocked by the *veto* of suspicious Europe.

But it must be remarked here that much earlier than the time of the insurrections of 1875—76 and the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, did the Bulgarians commence to waken up religiously, educationally, and politically, thanks to the influence of American factors in the Balkans. The translation of the Bible in 1864 was an exploit of Americans headed by the learned scholar, Dr. Riggs, and assisted by the Bulgarian Prelate, Neophyte of Rilo, and the Bulgarian poet Slaveykoff. Among the most prominent Bulgarian workers for the regeneration of Bulgaria were alumni of American and English schools

at Constantinople and Malta. The American professors and missionaries in European Turkey had the best opportunity of studying and acquainting themselves with the Balkan peoples. They know the Balkans better than the Russians. Prior to Bulgaria's independence no Russian lived in Bulgaria. This was due to political causes. The American missionaries and educators are the only foreigners who have made their residence in Bulgaria, Thrace, and Macedonia, and mingled freely with the people. They not only employed the Bulgarian language in their churches and schools, but published books and periodicals in the Bulgarian language, which were read throughout the Balkan Peninsula. The oldest Bulgarian paper today, *Zornitza*, was founded by an American. Among its noted editors may be mentioned the eminent scholar Robert Thomson, and A. Tsanoff, a graduate of Amherst College. Bulgarian literature owes a large number of its best productions to American authors. In nearly every Bulgarian house throughout the Balkans one will find such books which have been handed down from generation to generation as a precious inheritance. *Zornitza* is older than the Bulgarian Exarchy. It was edited in Bulgarian because the American religious workers had discovered that the compact mass of inhabitants in the Balkans was composed of Bulgarians. For the same reason the schools they opened there were known as Bulgarian schools, in which teaching was carried on in the Bulgarian or vernacular tongue. A clear idea on this point may be obtained from the memorandum which was addressed in 1913 by the representatives of the American Mission in the Balkans to the cabinets of all the Great Powers,

from which we excerpt the following passage: "The Bible was translated into modern Bulgarian and has been sold and distributed throughout Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Thrace. The language in which Protestant missionaries preach in all missions — with the exception of Mitrovitza, where Serbian is used — is Bulgarian. The missionaries have opened schools (gymnasias) in Samokow and Bitolia, and in Salonica an agricultural and industrial school has been opened. Primary schools are also supported by the Mission in many towns and villages in Bulgaria, and in some places in Macedonia: Bitolia, Koleshino, Mejurek (Kukush district), Enidje-Vardar, Todorak, Monospitovo, Strumitza, Drama, Bansko, Bania, Mehomia, Eleshnitza (Razlog district). In all these places the teaching has been and is still conducted in Bulgarian, and English was only recently introduced in the Girl's Boarding School in Bitolia."

In general, no other alien organization has worked so long and so disinterestedly among the Bulgarian people as have the American Missionary societies. No other strangers have been able to so intimately acquaint themselves with the everyday life of the Balkan nations, in general, and the Bulgarian race, in particular, as the American religious representatives, missionary workers, and educators. They have seen the Bulgarians while in bondage and in freedom, in time of affliction and in time of joy. They have lived and mingled with them, speak their language, have become familiar with their home and public life, their manners and customs, their temperament, their mind and soul. According to their testimony, there doesn't exist, and not only in the

Balkans, another people more modest, more quiet, more industrious, more democratic, and more tolerant. Preachers of the Gospel, of truth and true culture, the missionaries live and act in view of what is just and in harmony with their religious precepts. Whatever they say or do, the truth is their guiding principle. They hold allegiance to no party, serve no individual, and are bound to no creed but their own spiritual convictions. In view of such irrefragable evidences corroborating the important part Americans have taken in the regeneration of the Bulgarian people, are we not justified in admitting that Bulgaria owes its revival and independence no less to America than to Russia? Taking into consideration her democratic bent of mind, her democratic institutions, her spirit of toleration, her personal initiative of founding and maintaining her own schools, Bulgaria is a faithful pupil of her great American teacher. All those who love truth cannot disregard this mighty testimony: Having spent their lives in Bulgaria, the American missionaries and educators are the most competent persons to refer to, as to whether the Bulgarians are an intolerant people, and whether they are capable of the atrocities and crimes of which they are being accused. They are living witnesses of the national catastrophes of the Bulgarians during 1913, 1914 and 1915, and as such, they best know, that though the Bulgarians had done all in their power to come to an understanding with their neighbors, in 1915 they were compelled to enter in the war, not to fight their Liberator Russia, nor to array their bayonets against England and France, neither for any territorial conquest, as ill-intentioned people persist in asserting, but chiefly

to free their oppressed brethren, and realize the reunion of their race.

Between America and Bulgaria, without any doubt, there exist moral bonds which are as strong as they are sacred, because they are founded upon truth. America is primarily concerned with truth and equity, Bulgaria with the anxiety lest truth and equity fail to be respected. Truth is saying: In the Balkans there are Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbians, Albanians; equity decrees that every one of these peoples should be allotted its proper place, according to its ethnic dimensions, each nation be guaranteed the freedom of choosing its own form of government. That is the demand of the age in which we live, the age of justice and liberty for all states, large or small. The Balkan people, most of all, should take these principles to heart, be imbued with the crying necessities of the times, and seek salvation in a mutual understanding and federative union which is the only condition for their existence, for their economic progress, and their cultural welfare and creativeness.

America was in a position to understand Bulgaria, to penetrate into Bulgaria's inner being, comprehend her soul's throes and tragic experiences. America did not change her attitude towards her, did not waver in the belief of her just cause, and did not wish to change the ethnical map drawn out by Schuyler, Dr. Long, Dr. Washburn, and others.

In 1913 Russia wished to satisfy not the cravings of truth, but the illimitable ambitions of all Balkan states. Hence her vacillating diplomacy, her fatal irre

solution, hence her retrogression, her attempts to annihilate the work of General Ignatieff and Prince Tserteleff, hence the Bucarest Treaty, etc., etc.

America is conscious of only one task, to which she is wholly devoted: it is the duty towards truth, justice, freedom, civilization, humanity. That is the cardinal and guiding idea of President Wilson, which, happily, he is successfully inculcating into the minds of all nations. He never means to tear Bulgarian territory in order to give it to aliens, to Serbians, Greeks, Roumanians, and *vice-versa*. The Bulgarian people understands this and is elated over his genius which is the greatest guarantee to the oppressed and wronged races. Bulgaria is and will be the most ardent supporter of the principle enunciated by the venerable Head of the American Republic.

The efforts of Corfu and Athens are directed towards breaking the ties that bind Bulgaria with the United States. But no matter how desperately these efforts are made, one can hardly conceive how they could effect the course of action of the American Chief, which is measured out with such a judicious precision, firm conviction, and universal approval.

Mr. B. A. Reiss and his friends are either unable to see these facts, or are unwilling to see them as they actually are. They prefer to characterize Bulgaria's feeling towards America as "greed". Mr. Reiss writes:

"... Le Bulgare aime une seule chose: l'argent. Et l'Amérique fût l'Eldorado où, en homme économique, il allait gagner une petite fortune qu'il faisait prospérer ensuite chez lui, dans son pays. Naturellement, il veut

se conserver ce puit d'or et il sait bien qu'une déchiration de guerre pourrait le lui fermer. . .”

This assertion is as frivolous as it is groundless. In America there are very few Bulgarians from Bulgaria proper. During the year 1912 there were not more than 13,000 persons. Should one follow the logic of Mr. Reiss, America is Eldorado rather to Greeks and Serbians. In America there are today more than 22,000 Serbs and 45,000 Croats, organized. The number of the Herzegovinians is far greater. The number of Greeks is greater still. One should first consult his political history and statistical books before coming forward with his conclusions. Had he done so, Mr. Reiss would have easily discovered that the Bulgarians in reality care most for one thing — the truth, have respect, above all, for him who speaks the truth, and acts in conformity with it, without *parti pris*. If he is a person who sticks to facts, he would soon learn that the Bulgarian “avidity” and “insatiableness” are a fable. Athens and Corfu, through the pen of men like Mr. Reiss, attribute to the Bulgarian people ambitions and designs which it never cherished; that the Bulgarians had in view the usurpation of Albania and Epirus, of Janina, Salonica, and even Constantinople, that they dream of founding an Empire stretching from the Danube to the Aegean, and from the Adriatic to the Bosphorus. More than that, it is ever claimed that Bulgaria aims at the subjection of Serbians, Greeks, Roumanians, and at clutching the hegemony of the Balkans. All these statements are fictions. They are the ravings of a lunatic. The Bulgarians are too sober and practical a people to harbor such ideas in their

heads. They are noted the world over for their good common sense. Least of all are they imperialists. What they ardently yearn for, nevertheless, is their race reunion, the ethnic limits of which have already been drawn out in the Turkish *Firman* of 1870 which created the Bulgarian Independent Church, and which have been confirmed by the Constantinople Conference of 1876, and the San-Stefano Treaty in 1877. Being an element of order and industry, the Bulgarian is striving for a hegemony in only one thing — in a legitimate rivalry with his neighbors, in democracy, economic development, free institutions, education, and culture. He does not care for what belongs to others, but he holds stubbornly to his own.

Bern, Aug. 30, 1918.



